



News Release

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NMCC presents large print “airmen of note” posters to Presque Isle Air Museum

Aroostook County - The photos and stories of seven “airmen of note” who had a connection to the former Presque Isle Air Base or central Aroostook County have been captured and presented on large print posters through a collaborative effort between volunteers with the Presque Isle Air Museum and students and staff at Northern Maine Community College.

At a recent meeting of the Presque Isle Air Museum Committee, representatives of NMCC presented the group with seven large posters they produced using photos and text from the museum collection provided by committee member Gary Boone. Boone researched and wrote the narratives of seven different servicemen who either were natives of the Star City or made an indelible impact on the air base while it was operational.

The seven prints were originally created by NMCC for the Presque Isle Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner hosted on the College campus earlier this year. Since NMCC sits on the site of the former air base, the dinner was themed to resemble a USO show from the World War II era and held in the College gymnasium. The posters were also displayed at NMCC when the College hosted the official 150th birthday party for the city of Presque Isle in early April.

“We are so appreciative of Northern Maine Community College for the donation of the WWII posters to the museum,” said Nathan Grass, president of the Presque Isle Air Museum Committee. “We also thank the College for their recognition of the history of the Presque Isle Airport, especially during the World War II time period. The College sits on the site of the former Army Hospital that treated many returning soldiers wounded during the D-Day invasion and the Battle of the Bulge. This generous donation goes a long way toward assisting our efforts to remember our servicemen and women.”

The seven servicemen on the poster include Colonel Rafael Baez, Jr. who served as the first commanding officer of Presque Isle Army Air Field; Colonel Gerald Evan Williams, a Presque Isle native who was one of the first in Aroostook County to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point; Captain Dana F. Dudley of Mapleton, who was among the first group of B-17 crews to fly out of North Africa; Lieutenant Richard A. Graves of Presque Isle, who served both with the Royal Canadian Air Force and U.S. Army Air Corps; Lieutenant Everett L. “Ozzie” Osborn, a native of Minnesota who settled in Presque Isle and was involved in ferrying bombers from Presque Isle Army Air Base across the Atlantic to England, Africa and India; Sergeant Robert N. Smith of Presque Isle, a tail-gunner whose plane was shot down by the Germans and who was captured by the Germans and later managed to escape from a prisoner of war camp; and Ernest W. “Bus” Loane, Jr. of Presque Isle, who enlisted in the Army Air Corps, earned his fame as one of the original fighter pilots in the American Volunteer Group – the famed “Flying Tigers” – in Burma and China during 1941-42, and on whose family farm the Air Base was built.

“Working on this project collaboratively with members of the Presque Isle Air Museum Committee, especially Mr. Gary Boone and Dr. Richard Graves, has been an extraordinary learning experience for our students and staff,” said Jason Parent, NMCC director of development and college relations. “It has been extremely valuable in terms of us gaining a better appreciation for those who came before us, those who defended our freedom, and even those who walked on the same ground we do each day on our campus.”

Working on the project with Parent was student – now – graduate Denise Sock of Ashland. Sock assisted with layout and design and worked with fellow students Shannon Smart of New Sweden and Brittany Hewitt of Presque Isle to display the large prints along with artifacts on loan from the Presque Isle Air Museum from the WWII era at both NMCC events.

According to Parent, the information will again be used in the coming years as NMCC prepares for its 50th anniversary celebration, which will begin in 2011.

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The stories of seven area “airmen of note” on large print posters were recently donated by Northern Maine Community College to the Presque Isle Air Museum. The prints were developed through a collaborative partnership between the two organizations and used at two community events held earlier this year on the NMCC campus. Presenting the posters on behalf of NMCC are (left to right) Jason Parent, director of development and college relations, and Denise Sock, member of the class of 2009. Accepting the posters on behalf of the air museum are committee president Nathan Grass and committee member Gary Boone.